



File Code: 1950

Date: November 23, 2020

Dear Friend of the Forest:

This project announcement letter serves to initiate scoping, “an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed” (40 CFR 1501.7). I request your input on the following two Forest Service proposals to conduct prescribed burning treatments on approximately 9,844 acres in the Andy Knight Burn Unit and on approximately 8,935 acres in the Scottside Burn Unit. Separate decisions will be issued for these projects.

These areas need to be prescribed burned to establish a burn rotation to move toward a fully restored shortleaf pine/bluestem grass ecosystem. This will also give us an opportunity to better address the effects of these large-scale burns on Proposed, Endangered, Threatened and Sensitive (PETS) species.

Most of the Andy Knight project area is in Management Area (MA) 22 (Renewal of the Shortleaf Pine/Bluestem Grass Ecosystem and Red-Cockaded Woodpecker (RCW) Habitat) with a tiny part of Compartment 1265 located in MA 21 (Old Growth Restoration Pine Emphasis). The Scottside project area is in MA 14 (Ouachita Mountains—Habitat Diversity Emphasis) and the American Burying Beetle Area (ABBA).

The principal objectives for these prescribed burning projects are to establish the habitat condition necessary for the endangered RCW and the endangered American burying beetle (ABB). This project would also reduce fuel loading; improve forest health by restoring shortleaf pine/bluestem grass characteristics; and control understory vegetation. The proposed prescribed burning treatments could occur in both growing and dormant season, and will be conducted on a 3-5 year rotational basis. Using internal firelines, these blocks may be burned at different times. The proposed burn areas consist of the following:

Burn Unit Name	Approx. Acres	Compartments	Location	Management Area (MA)
Andy Knight	9,844	1242, 1243, 1244, 1252, 1253, 1254, 1264, 1265 (tiny portion in MA 21), 1266, 1267, 1270	Scott County, AR	MA 22 & 21
Scottside	8,935	242, 243, 245, 246, 248, 249	Scott County, AR	MA 14 & ABBA

Burns may be accomplished by aerial ignition and/or ground ignition in various acreages to insure safe burning operations. Existing firelines, roads, creeks, or old woods roads will be utilized as firelines, where possible. No new fireline construction is anticipated. No herbicide use or road construction is proposed.

This proposal falls into a category of actions for which a Project or Case File and Decision Memo are required (timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not

include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standard road construction; 36 CFR 220.6(e)(6)).

Scoping is not limited to a single point in time; we will continue to accept and consider comments until an implementation decision is made. With that said, your comments will be most helpful if they are received by December 23, 2020. Your involvement will enable us to better assess concerns of the public. Comments may be mailed to Dava Bauer, PO Box 417, Booneville, AR 72927, or emailed to dava.bauer@usda.gov. Please specify your email comments relate to this project.

If you have questions about this project or would like more information, please contact R.L. Self at (479) 637-4174 or email him at raymond.self@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Warren Montague".

for BENNIE H. SOUTH
District Ranger

Enclosure: Maps

DLB/db